

Nov. 22, '76

Dear Dr. Wimalajeewa,

I am glad you go to Sri Lanka and when you are there just before Dec, 18' you could inquire at Forest Hermitage Sri Lanka whether Khun Sujin or Phra Dhammadharo is still there. Khun Sujin is leaving next week for another trip to Sri Lanka, 2 or 3 weeks, but maybe. You cannot make it sooner? I think you will miss Jenni now, but maybe another time.

You ask my comment about the fact that you experience now the arising and falling away of namas, within a process, but not the arising and falling away of rupas. I am afraid I cannot answer your question very well because I do not know anything about arising and falling away. I know in theory that ~~names~~ namas and rupas arise and fall away and that this is the third vipassana ~~nana~~ which cannot be experienced at all before there is no more doubt about the difference between the characteristic of nama and the characteristic of rupa.

Since, as you say, you do not experience the arising and falling away of rupas I think it couldn't be the ~~third~~ third ~~nana~~, because half a ~~nana~~ does not exist?

Therefore, I do not quite understand what you mean by experiencing, not thinking about, the arising and falling away of namas. Could you explain this some more? You say that it is a real experiencing of the process, do you mean: sampaticchana-citta, santirana-citta, and all the other cittas?

Quite a few people, including myself, have had misunderstandings as to thinking, experiencing and mindfulness. One may have the impression that there is no thinking, and still, there may just be 'noticing' of something without there being awareness. It is so easy to mislead oneself, and it is bound to happen all the time, because of our desire. When you think that there is awareness of a paticchana-citta, can you be sure it is not one of the cetasikas which appear, or the feeling? Citta is accompanied by cetasikas, and any of these ~~may~~ may appear and be object of awareness. When there is seeing and later on thinking about what is seen, it may seem that one can experience the falling away of seeing, since a next moment there may be thinking, or hearing, or thinking about what one hears. In reality all this is really just noticing, a very quick noticing.

I find a helpful way of checking myself, as I also wrote to Lila, to ask oneself whether one has the intention to be mindful, and to attain vipassana ~~nanas~~. If that is so, sure it is bound to be attachment to sati most of the time.

You ^{may} wonder whether there is not wholesome intention. There is, and it arises together, at the same time as sati. Thus whenever there is the right sati, there is wholesome intention already, whereas when you think you want to be aware, it is most of the time not wholesome, because there is bound to be clinging.

When there is awareness, there is no thinking of the process, because when there is thinking of the process, there is a concept of a whole which is object of citta which thinks, it is altogether different from awareness. Or when you would recognize sampaticchana-citta (but who does?) it is thinking, even when you do not think 'this is sampaticchana-citta' the object may still be a concept. At the moment of awareness you forget all about the book, and you do not try to classify at all, there is just awareness of any characteristic which appears.

For sati there is no order of the objects of awareness. It is not so that there is first awareness of something appearing through the sense-door and then through the mind-door. Sati goes its own way and is completely unpredictable.

But don't you find that knowing the difference between nama and rupa is already difficult enough? When this is not known thoroughly there cannot be a higher development of insight. For instance, when there is pain, when is it that the experience of the object which impinges appears and when the rupa, and when the aversion which arises ~~as soon as~~ in between the experience of the object which impinges, and when is it the feeling which appears? When is it unpleasant bodily feeling, and when unpleasant mental feeling? We should not try to entangle all this, but it may be an example which shows where the difficulties may be and how little we know.

We learn that we should know the difference between thinking and sati. This seems easy, but because of our clinging it is not easy. Sati has only one object at a time, and at such a moment the object cannot be a whole or a concept, or classification. When there is recognition of a process, it is thinking, that is thinking of how one ^{feels} the sati should be aware, first of this and then of that.

You are still wondering how the arising and falling away of rupa which takes 17 moments of citta can be known by cittas which are aware. I would not worry, pāñña will know when the time comes. It is more important to know first what rupa really is. We do not really know so long as we mix it with nama.

It is important to know feeling more. You said that you have pleasant feeling when there is awareness. Is it pleasant feeling which is kusala or pleasant feeling which may accompany lobha-mulacitta? I find will give another example. When I think with confidence of the Buddha's teachings there is enthusiasm, and this is accompanied by pleasant feeling. But shortly afterwards there is pleasant feeling also because of attachment to the pleasant feeling which arose before and it seems that pleasant feeling lasts, while in reality many kinds of pleasant feeling have arisen and fallen away. It shows my ignorance and clinging, which have been accumulated for so long, in many lives. How could these be eradicated in the course of a few years?

We have learnt that we do not see a table or person, only visible object, that which appears through the eyes. But now, let us forget all about books, all we learnt, and what is seen now? Are we sure what visible object is, or does it seem that a table or chair can appear through the eyes? Does doubt still arise? When we think we see a table there is wrong view. How could it be eradicated at once. You said that you have eradicated the belief in a self. But when we not only what we call 'I' is a self, also when we think we see a table there is self. We may know in theory that there is no self, but in the practice? Only a sotapanna has eradicated the belief in a self, never to come back again. We have the latent tendency of this wrong view and it can arise when there are conditions for it. For the development of the eightfold Path we have to face our kilesas and it is necessary that we are absolutely sincere with ourselves. Do we want to prove to others how good our understanding is? Life is too short for that. I also think that we want to prove to ourselves that our understanding and awareness is not so bad. Let us not prove anything of this kind, but let there be awareness now and then without trying, and without trying to concentrate on nama and rupa.

The best we can do is help one another with very simple reminders of nama and rupa, we all need help now and then.

I think the most marvellous thing of the Buddha's teachings is that they help you to see what you do not know, if you are openminded, and only in that way panna can be developed. Nowhere in the world have I found a teaching which can do that. For a while we may think: 'I can experience this or that', but through the teachings we can learn what we really know or don't know yet, and then we stop making ourselves believe that we can experience what we cannot know yet.